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New Mexico First Redistricting Taskforce Develops 18 Recommendations to Strengthen Redistricting

New Mexico First launched a statewide task force to develop recommendations about political redistricting in October 2020. Retired Chief New Mexico Supreme Court Justice Edward Chavez and retired Chief New Mexico Court of Appeals Judge Roderick Kennedy were selected as the taskforce's co-chairs. This 25 person task force arrived at 18 consensus-backed recommendations. One overarching recommendation was to codify redistricting rules and processes into law rather than advisory guidelines. Recommendations ranged from requirements to justify any deviations from the one person one vote doctrine and rejection of partisan approaches to redistricting to the establishment of independent bodies to oversee or decide on political maps and acknowledgment of the important role the public has in the mapping process.

Justice Chavez, Co-chair of the New Mexico First Redistricting Taskforce, explained, "The Task Force has made recommendations that will 1) safeguard the right of the people to choose their representatives as opposed to the representatives choosing their voters; 2) demand transparency and prioritize robust public participation, and 3) encourage the use of an independent advisory committee to develop and recommend redistricting maps which do not favor a political party or protect incumbents."

Co-chair Judge Kennedy further described the importance of this cross-partisan effort. "As we look at the restriction of voting rights and opportunities nationwide, it is more important than ever to provide every citizen the equal opportunity to vote and have their vote counted. Strengthening the power to vote by making sure our electoral districts are competitive, responsive to our interests and needs, and truly representative of our population is essential. The work of this broad-based and professional task force firmly plants the flag for robust public participation in drawing political districts independent of partisan considerations."

"The 18 recommendations received at least 85% consensus support from taskforce members and reflect the needs, interests, and values of communities across New Mexico. Taskforce members deliberated thoughtfully and vigorously while developing cutting-edge public policy recommendations that have the ability to strengthen fairness and confidence in our democracy," noted Lilly Irvin-Vitela, President and Executive Director of New Mexico First and taskforce facilitator.

Members of the Redistricting Taskforce included: Merritt Allen (Tijeras); David Buchholtz, Rodey Law Firm (Albuquerque); Ahtza Chavez, NAVA Education Project (Albuquerque); N.M State Representative Rebecca Dow, (T or C); N.M. State Representative Kelly Fajardo (Los Lunas); Jeremy Farris, NM Ethics Commission (Albuquerque); N.M. State Representative Natalie Figueroa (Albuquerque); Tom Garrity, The Garrity Group PR Firm, (Albuquerque); Leonard Gorman, Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission (Navajo Nation); C. Earl Greer, NM Farm and Livestock Bureau (Elephant Butte); Anita Hand, Catron County Commission (Datil); Mario Jimenez III, Common Cause NM (Santa Fe); Carmen Lopez, Democracy Rising (Santa Fe); Katon Luaces (Albuquerque); Dick Mason, League of Women Voters (Santa Fe); N.M. State Senator Mark Moores (Albuquerque); N.M State Senator Bill O'Neill (Albuquerque); N.M. State Senator Gerald "Jerry" Ortiz y Pino (Albuquerque); Cedric Page, Santa Fe Branch NAACP (Santa Fe); N.M. State Senator Shannon Pinto (Tohatchi); Maureen Skowran, Geospatial and Population Studies University of New Mexico (Albuquerque); Sandra Taylor-Sawyer, Dream Givers LLC (Clovis); N.M. State Representative Jim Townsend (Artesia).

Read the final recommendations report by going to <https://nmfirst.org/recommendations>

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